

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-22 (canceled)

Claim 23 (Currently amended): An apparatus for evaluating the integrity of a seal on a liquid-filled container having a closure, the apparatus comprising:

a clamp having a first and second member for securing a container between the members;
a ram connected to the clamp to provide relative movement between the first and second members; and,

a liquid-filled tank situated with respect to the clamp such that at least a portion of a the container having the closure secured between the first and second members may extend into the tank ~~and a~~ such that the closure of the container be is submerged in the liquid.

Claim 24 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the ram is actuated by one of the group consisting of air pressure, hydraulic pressure, and electric motor, ~~and combinations of these.~~

Claim 25 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 23 ~~having~~ further comprising a seat to support a container in a desired position to be secured by the clamp.

Claim 26 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 23 ~~including~~ further comprising a means for forming an aperture in a container while being secured in the clamp.

Claim 27 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 23 ~~wherein the apparatus includes~~ further comprising a support platform which is moveable along a floor surface on devices for reducing friction between the platform and the floor surface, the clamp and the tank being

mounted on the platform.

Claim 28 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 25 ~~including~~ further comprising a means for forming an aperture in a container.

Claim 29 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 25 ~~wherein the apparatus includes~~ further comprising a support platform which is moveable along a floor surface on devices for reducing friction between the platform and the floor surface, the clamp and the tank being mounted on the platform.

Claim 30 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 26 ~~including~~ further comprising a support for the means for forming an aperture, the support being configured to accommodate vertical and horizontal movement of the means for forming an aperture.

Claim 31 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 28 ~~including~~ further comprising a support for the means for forming an aperture, the support being configured to accommodate vertical and horizontal movement of the means for forming an aperture.

Claim 32 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the devices for reducing friction between the platform and the floor surface ~~include~~ comprise a plurality of wheels.

Claim 33 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the devices for reducing friction between the platform and the floor surface ~~include~~ comprise a plurality of wheels.

Claim 34 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the platform ~~has~~ comprises at least one connector for removably connecting the apparatus to a source of electricity.

Claim 35 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the platform ~~has~~ comprises at least one connector for removably connecting the apparatus to a source of pressurized air.

Claim 36 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the platform ~~has~~ comprises at least one connector for removably connecting the apparatus to a source of electricity.

Claim 37 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the platform ~~has~~ comprises at least one connector for removably connecting the apparatus to a source of pressurized air.

Claim 38 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 26 further comprising:

a conductivity evaluating instrument including a first and second electrode, the first electrode being integrated with the means for forming an aperture such that when the means for forming an aperture penetrates a wall of a container, the first electrode is in contact with the liquid in the container without removing the means for forming an aperture from the container; and,

the second electrode of the instrument being immersed in the liquid in the tank.

Claim 39 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 28 further comprising:

a conductivity evaluating instrument including a first and second electrode, the first electrode being integrated with the means for forming an aperture such that when the means for forming an aperture penetrates a wall of a container, the first electrode is in contact with the liquid in the container without removing the means for forming an aperture from the container; and,

the second electrode of the instrument being immersed in the liquid in the tank.

Claim 40 (Previously presented): The apparatus of claim 26 further comprising:

a conductivity evaluating instrument including a first and second electrode, the first electrode being moveable and sized such that it can be inserted into an aperture formed in the container and extend into the liquid in the container; and,

the second electrode of the instrument being immersed in the liquid in the tank.

Claim 41 (Previously presented): The apparatus of claim 28 further comprising:

a conductivity evaluating instrument including a first and second electrode, the first electrode being moveable and sized such that it can be inserted into an aperture formed in the container and extend into the liquid in the container; and,

the second electrode of the instrument being immersed in the liquid in the tank.

Claim 42 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 38 wherein the means for forming an aperture in a container ~~may include an element~~ is selected from the group consisting of a drill, a heated lance, a mechanical punch and an electrode.

Claim 43 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 39 wherein the means for forming an aperture in a container ~~may be~~ is selected from the group consisting of a drill, a heated lance, a mechanical punch and an electrode.

Claim 44 (Currently amended): The apparatus of claim 40 wherein the means for forming an aperture in a container ~~may include an element~~ is selected from the group consisting of a drill, a heated lance, a mechanical punch and an electrode.

Claim 45 (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 41 wherein the means for forming an aperture in a container ~~may be~~ is selected from the group consisting of a drill, a heated lance, a mechanical punch and an electrode.

Claim 46 (Currently amended): A method for evaluating the integrity of a seal on a liquid-filled container comprising the steps of:

securing a liquid-filled container in a clamp such that a portion of that container extends into the liquid of a liquid-filled tank;

forming an aperture in a wall of the secured container;

providing a first electrode in the aperture formed in the container and providing a second electrode in the liquid-filled tank; and,

electrically comparing the first and second electrodes.

Claim 47 (Currently amended): The method of Claim 46 wherein the step of electrically comparing ~~includes~~ comprises the step of comparing a quantity selected from the group consisting of conductance, dielectric value, impedance, inductance, current, resistance and capacitance.

Claim 48 (Currently amended): The method of Claim 46 wherein the step of securing a container in the clamp ~~includes~~ comprises the step of closing the clamp with a ram.

Claim 49 (Currently amended): A method for evaluating the integrity of a seal on a liquid-filled container comprising the steps of:

securing a liquid-filled container in a clamp such that a portion of that container extends into a liquid-filled tank;

forming an aperture in the secured container with a device that penetrates a wall of the container and providing that at least a portion of the device defines a first electrode;

providing a second electrode in the liquid-filled tank; and,

electrically comparing the first and second electrodes.

Claim 50 (Currently amended): A method for evaluating the integrity of a seal on a liquid-filled container comprising the steps of:

immersing at least a closure portion of the container in the liquid of a liquid-filled tank;

forming an aperture in a wall of the container after immersion;

providing a first electrode in the aperture formed in the container and providing a second electrode in the liquid-filled tank; and,

electrically comparing the first and second electrodes.